

'On Golden Pond' Well-Received

By JOHN HOWE

"On Golden Pond" received a warm reception from the more than 300 New Hampshire people on hand in Concord Thursday for the film's New England premiere.

Guests for the made-in-New Hampshire film included Governor Hugh Gallen, state officials and members of the news media. But the real stars were the many residents who had contributed to the film. Many were present.

It begins and ends with a panoramic view of Squam Lake shimmering with golden sunlight. The scene provides a tranquil setting for a sometimes

stormy, at times hilarious and frequently warm story of an older couple dealing with age and a long-standing conflict between father and daughter.

"It's just tremendous," was the reaction of Penny Pitou of Gilford, a member of the N.H. Film Bureau. Her response was typical of those leaving the theater, many of whom remarked that it makes the state look good.

"What impressed me was that the region's natural surroundings were made such an integral part of the plot," said Malcolm "Tink" Taylor of

Holderness, president of the Squam Lakes Association. "The interaction between characters and the scenery was very sensitive."

The picturesque beauty of Squam Lake and rare close-up photography of loons in fact are prominent throughout.

A loon's solitary call is immediately recognized and obviously precious to Ethel Thayer (Katharine Hepburn) as she and her turning-80 husband Norman (Henry Fonda) return to their dusty old camp for another summer. It is obvious Norman fears it's his last.

The loon and its mate provide an interesting dialogue with the Thayers, first as new arrivals from warmer climes, then with newborn young and finally alone again preparing for another winter. It is much

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Attends Premiere

Governor Hugh Gallen welcomes Penny Pitou of Gilford, a member of the N.H. Film Bureau, to the New England premiere of "On Golden Pond."

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like the main story line of the film.

It is only appropriate the film is set in the Lakes Region. Countless summer residents consider lakeshore cottages their "real home", despite where they live the rest of the year, and return every summer to be rejuvenated. The same is true for the Thayers.

Billy, a know-it-all 13-year-old from California (Doug McKeon) enters the couple's life for one month and helps resolve some of the conflicts between cantankerous Norman and his alienated daughter Chelsea (Jane Fonda).

Billy is the son of Chelsea's dentist friend and is left behind while they head off to Europe. His bitterness about being

"dumped" is a good match for Norman's sourness about entering his 80th year. They grow close as the month passes.

At the center of the production are fine performances by all lead characters. The Thayers are portrayed with tenderness by Fonda and Hepburn who seem incredibly natural together. McKeon is impressive in not being overshadowed by the two.

The cranky statements of two persons who know each other well provides the film with real-life humor: "Ethel! Someone's at the door," Norman growls to his wife, hearing a rap-rap across the cottage. "It's me, you old poop!" yells Ethel, standing outside the door with an armful of firewood.

Several local landmarks are very prominent. In an early scene Norman and Ethel go to town by boat and stop for gas at a well-known Holderness marina.

The state's contribution to the movie is acknowledged as part of the credits which are projected over a scenic backdrop made of panoramic shots of Squam Lake.

At the risk of sounding like an "old coot", there are several observations worth noting. Swear words are used frequently and can become annoying. Several shots of Squam Lake looked a lot like Winnepesaukee. And the use of a classic wooden outboard motorboat for fishing excursions seems a bit unlikely. On the story, the director goes to great length to establish the conflict between father and daughter, but the resolution comes rather abruptly.

Still, there is more to the movie than first meets the eye. After the excitement of seeing the Lakes Region on film fades away, the grappling with real life issues touches the soul and lingers on in the mind.